

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuban leader pays tribute to José Ramón Fernández
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Virginia teachers march over low wages, school conditions



Militant/Ruth Nebbia

Jan. 28 protest by thousands of Virginia teachers, other school workers and their supporters. Since 2008 state has cut thousands of teaching and school positions while enrollment soared.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

RICHMOND, Va. — Thousands of red-jacketed teachers, other school workers and their supporters rallied at the state Capitol here Jan. 28 protesting both the long-standing decline of the schools and state government budget cuts that slashed school funding,

building maintenance and teachers' pay.

Carrying a sign, "I teach, I coach, I'm broke," Jessie Smith, a high school teacher in Chesterfield, joined the Virginia Educators United-led march from Monroe Park. "I've heard

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'I want to join your campaign!' SWP gets hearing in Texas working class



Militant/Eric Simpson

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas mayor, shows auto worker Jason Denton new book *In Defense of US Working Class*, Jan. 25, while campaigning door to door.

BY GEORGE CHALMERS

DALLAS — Socialist Workers Party mayoral candidate Alyson Kennedy and fellow campaigners have knocked on doors in working-class neighborhoods all across Dallas and the surrounding Texas region for the last two weeks — introducing the party and discussing how working people need to organize and fight in their own interests.

They've found widespread interest in discussing what working people face today, the crisis of capitalism be-

hind these conditions and the proposals the SWP campaign raises.

This is the main activity of the SWP. Party members follow the roads to cities and towns to stop and knock on doors to speak with working people. SWP campaigners discuss the conditions working people face and that the only way out, in the face of what capitalism has to offer, is along the working-class road to power.

In East Dallas, Kennedy met Felicia Palacios, 32, who said that some male

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Davos Forum marks political crises afflicting capitalist rulers

BY TERRY EVANS

The annual gathering of some 3,000 bosses, bankers and speculators, heads of state and meritocratic hangers-on at the World Economic Forum took place in Davos, Switzerland, Jan. 22-25. The event was marked by the sharpening political crisis confronting the various capitalist rivals, as they compete for markets and political influence in the course of a protracted worldwide crisis.

This year President Donald Trump, head of the world's dominant imperialist power, chose to stay home amid a government shutdown spurred by differences over the pace of immigration. French President Emmanuel Macron, one of the continent's most ardent "globalists," didn't come, trying to grapple with ongoing yellow vest protests by working people across the country. And U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May stayed in London as the March deadline for a break from the European Union gets closer and closer. These developments reflect the mark of the working class on politics today.

Established in 1971, the World

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US hands off Venezuela! Stop threats against Cuba!

The following statement was released by Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Public Advocate, Jan. 30.

The U.S. government — backed by Democrats and Republicans alike —

SWP STATEMENT
—see related news article p. 8

has unilaterally declared the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela "illegitimate" and turned its U.S. bank accounts over to self-proclaimed "president" Juan Guaidó. Washington is calling on the Venezuelan military to overthrow Maduro's government. And the U.S. rulers are spewing slanders about the Cuban internationalist volunteers in Venezuela. With shameless cynicism, they claim to be acting in the name of "democracy."

The Socialist Workers Party condemns this blatant violation of the sovereignty of Venezuela. Only the people of Venezuela have the right to

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Chicago, DC meetings celebrate 60 years of Cuba's revolution

BY JANET POST

Over 60 people attended a meeting to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution in Chicago Jan. 26 and to discuss building the April

21-May 5 May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade in Solidarity with Cuba. Six people signed up to go on the brigade and over \$700 was collected to help fund their trip.

The meeting was held at the Service Employees International Union Healthcare Illinois headquarters. Participants were welcomed by Faith Arnold, the state union vice president. Arnold talked about her experiences on last year's brigade, where she joined with 290 others from 31 countries, including 74 from the United States. "I just loved seeing all the union contingents marching on May

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Coal miners face rise in scourge of deadly black lung disease

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Black lung disease is on the rise among coal miners throughout Appalachia, with the most deadly forms now affecting a younger generation of miners. Facts about this debilitating and deadly disease were highlighted in an NPR/Frontline program "Coal's Deadly Dust" broadcast nationwide Jan. 22.

Miners, retirees and their families waged a mighty battle — and carried out a revolution that transformed the United Mine Workers union — in the 1960s and '70s. This fight led to miners and the UMW winning a large measure of control over conditions and safety in the mines and succeeded in pushing

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Kurdish protesters push back against Sulaymaniyah censors

BY SAVAN AKO

SULAYMANIYAH, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — In a blow to artistic freedom, Cinema Salim was closed down by security forces here Jan. 8. The censorship was aimed at preventing the theater from screening the short film “Three Days in 10 Years,” which depicts the life of Sakine Cansiz. She was one of the co-founders of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has waged a decadeslong armed struggle against the Turkish government’s denial of Kurdish national rights. Cansiz was killed by the Turkish secret service in 2013 in Paris.

“Those who fight for a better world cannot go home and rest when things like this occur,” Cinema Salim owner Rawaz Hama Salih told a press conference, denouncing the censorship. “So we shout and say, ‘No we don’t accept this.’” Students at the Institute of Fine Arts held up placards protesting the cinema’s closure that read “Freedom for Cinema Salim.”

The government of Sulaymaniyah is led by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the two main parties in the Kurdistan Regional Government. Turkish leaders accuse the PUK of giving political support to the PKK. The censorship was part of PUK efforts to appease the Turkish government, to convince them to reverse the closure of its airspace to flights to and from the city.

Ankara had shut down this airspace in 2017 as punishment for the overwhelming vote for independence in a referendum held by the KRG that September. Turkish airspace was reopened to flights from Erbil in March,

but the ban on flights from Sulaymaniyah was left in place.

In addition to closing the theater, the PUK-led government shut down the offices and arrested members of Tavgarî Azadi, the Kurdistan Free Society Movement, a group linked to the PKK. And the sale of books by PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was barred.

Turkish Transport Minister Mehmet Cahit Turhan announced Jan. 23 that daily flights to the airport would begin again in three days. The Cinema Salim was allowed to reopen Jan. 9, and Azad Baiz, head of communications at the General Directorate of Culture and Art in Sulaymaniyah, said the theater would be allowed to screen the film.



Students at Institute of Fine Arts in Sulaymaniyah, in Kurdistan region in Iraq, joined Cinema Salim to protest censorship barring showing of film about government attacks against Kurdish struggle for self-determination in Turkey. Placard says, “Freedom for Cinema Salim.”

Deadly black lung surges among US coal miners

Continued from front page
back the scourge of black lung.

But since then bosses have been able to greatly increase the number of non-union mines. In Kentucky there is no longer a single UMW-organized mine.

One in five working underground coal miners in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia today with at least 25 years on the job has black lung, the highest rate in a quarter of a century.

“But today miners in their 40s with 10 years of experience are getting diagnosed with progressive massive fibrosis,” James Werth, black lung program director at Stone Mountain Health Services in St. Charles, Virginia, said in a phone interview Jan. 25. “We’ve been

seeing this for years and it seems to be increasing. Given that it’s a progressive illness we don’t see it slowing down anytime soon.”

Progressive massive fibrosis is an aggressive and often fatal form of black lung affecting miners as young as in their 30s or even 20s.

With big coal seams in Appalachia played out, miners have to cut through more rock to get to thinner seams of coal, producing toxic silica dust. These particles are so fine that respirators don’t capture them and they get imbedded in miners’ lungs. In their drive for profits the coal bosses are driving fewer workers to work longer hours, meaning miners face greater exposure to the dust.

While the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health counted just 115 cases of advanced black lung nationwide from 2010 to 2018, NPR reported they “identified more than 2,300 cases by contacting health clinics across Appalachia.”

After nearly 2 1/2 decades in the mines, 44-year-old Danny Fouts told the *Los Angeles Times* he is no longer able to work. His lungs are now operating at less than 45 percent of capacity.

“There are people still working in mines that can have advanced stages of the disease and don’t know about it,” Werth said.

Coal bosses want to institute mandatory testing of miners, but workers have expressed opposition, knowing the companies will use these tests to get rid of workers whose health is starting to deteriorate, leaving them to fend for themselves to try to get measly government black lung benefits.

The way to eliminate the blight of black lung is to emulate what coal miners did several decades ago. Some 40,000 miners in West Virginia walked out of the mines in 1969, in a wildcat strike backed by the newly formed Black Lung Association. They forced the state legislature to pass a bill ordering coal bosses to pay compensation for black lung. Clinics were set up all over Appalachia.

The strike inspired thousands of miners to back Jock Yablonski in his run for president of the union that year in an effort to oust the corrupt Tony Boyle machine. Boyle hired thugs who shot and killed Yablonski, his wife and daughter.

Miners fought back. Joined by the Disabled Miners and Widows of Southern West Virginia, they succeeded in taking back their union. Miners set up union safety committees with the power to shut production — power they used — to enforce safety. Incidents of black lung declined more than 90 percent from the 1970s to the mid-1990s.

THE MILITANT

Join protests against cop brutality, killings!

Jason Van Dyke, first Chicago cop to be convicted of murder in an on-duty shooting in 50 years, was sentenced to over six years in prison for killing Laquan McDonald. The ‘Militant’ explains cops and the entire “justice” system function to serve the interests of the wealthy rulers.



AP Photo/Teresa Crawford
Right, Rev. Marvin Hunter, uncle of Laquan McDonald killed by Chicago cops in 2014.

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Political crises mark Davos

Continued from front page

Economic Forum has become one of the vehicles of the “world order” established after the Second World War through which different capitalist rulers seek to gain advantage for their competing interests. And where the liberal glitterati gather to puff up their anti-working-class schemes and themes they are determined to foist on us.

Unless you’re a president or other government leader, you have to be invited and pay \$20,000 to get into this year’s “Globalization 4.0” shindig. Once inside, a hot dog costs \$43.

Today organizations like the World Economic Forum, the European Union and World Trade Organization are being pulled apart by the rulers’ deepening competition that is rooted in the four-decades-long decline in their profit rates.

In recent years the forum has been marked by the declining influence of the U.S. rulers and the much more declining fortunes of the other capitalist powers that won out in the second imperialist world war, as well as the growing influence of Beijing. Despite Washington’s relative decline, there is no rising power that can yet match its economic and military clout.

For President Trump, events like the forum are less and less central. His government seeks to advance the interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers by engaging in direct talks with other government leaders, bypassing all the “globalist” world bodies. The Trump administration wields protectionist tariffs and sanctions on the one hand and promises of aid and profitable relations on the other in its “negotiations” with the U.S. rulers’ rivals.

“This disruption is a positive development,” said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a video message beamed to the meeting. He was responding to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and a long line of other speakers who attacked Washington’s unilateral trade policies. Former Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath said Trump was “leading the world in making the global trading order collapse.”

For the U.S. capitalist rulers, the “global trading order” means, as Trump puts it, “America first.”

“The U.S. ruling families and their rivals in Europe and the Pacific engage in ceaseless efforts to maximize their own profits the world over,” ex-

plains Steve Clark in the introduction to *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record; Why Washington Fears Working People*. “And it’s working people the world over who are carrying the burdens of that deepening social calamity.”

Advice from a billionaire

In a letter to the meeting, billionaire U.S. investor Seth Klarman — whose annual advice to the forum is sought after by many capitalist investors worldwide — warned that mounting government debt could trigger “the next financial crisis.” And, he advised, “It can’t be business as usual amid constant protests, riots, shutdowns and escalating social tensions.”

The splintering of the European Union was on full display. EU authorities had threatened disciplinary measures against the Italian government over its \$2.8 trillion debt, which they say breaks “EU rules.” But then they turned a blind eye in December to Rome’s refusal to lower the debt when the Italian government promised to reign in some of its social spending plans.

Formed to give capitalist rulers in Europe greater clout in conflicts with U.S. bosses, the EU is used by capitalist rulers in Germany, and to a lesser degree in France, to bolster their profits at the expense of their weaker rivals in Greece, Spain and Italy, hitting working people there the hardest.

The EU parliament adopted



Serge D'Ignazio

Yellow vest protest in Paris Jan. 26, one of many actions across France against President Emmanuel Macron’s government. Bosses at forum in Davos expressed fears that such actions by working people against the impact of the crisis of capitalism foretell “unrest to come.”

measures Jan. 17 on the eve of the World Economic Forum that allow the European Commission to withhold funding to any member state it chooses, making it easier for EU bureaucrats to punish governments like Italy or Greece they find themselves in conflict with.

EU officials are keen to keep the U.K. tied into the European “Union” despite the 2016 referendum vote where a majority — largely working class — voted for Britain to get out of the protectionist trading bloc. Prime Minister May, who like most of the British rulers wants to stay in the EU, is seeking parliamentary backing for

her plans to defy the vote and hold onto as much of the U.K.’s EU integration as possible.

Government indifference to the depression conditions stalking millions of working people has spurred growing electoral support for political parties opposed to the EU and broader discontent across much of Europe. The capitalist rulers fear deeper working-class action. Canadian federal pension fund boss Michael Sabia echoed the concern of many when he told the Davos crowd that the yellow vest protests sweeping large parts of France are a foretaste of “unrest to come.”

‘Militant’ winter special appeal wins contributions

BY TERRY EVANS

Readers of the *Militant* have promised \$5,735 and sent in \$1,960 — a solid step towards the paper’s winter financial appeal to raise \$10,000. The money will provide a bridge until the *Militant* launches its annual Fighting Fund this spring. The appeal runs through Feb. 14.

“We planned to raise at least \$750 from readers for the appeal,” reported Anthony Dutrow from Miami, “but pledges totaling \$865 have been made, so we have to consider increasing how

much we can raise now.” So far two readers have sent in \$145.

At a recent Militant Labor Forum in Miami SWP member Amanda Ullman described features of the *Militant*’s new and improved website that make the paper’s 90-year record of reporting on working-class struggles more accessible to readers as part of an appeal.

“I really like the *Militant*’s weekly reports on discussions SWP members have on workers’ doorsteps,” said a longtime reader in Washington, D.C.

“It’s an insight into what other workers face. Without the paper’s coverage on what’s happening in the Middle East, I wouldn’t understand what’s going on there.” He gave \$75 to the appeal.

The paper speaks in the interest of the working class and provides readers with a working-class view that is unique. Every week it carries articles on political developments at home and abroad, reporting on labor and social struggles from participants, the Socialist Workers Party 2019 election campaigns and the irreplaceable lessons from the history of the revolutionary working-class movement.

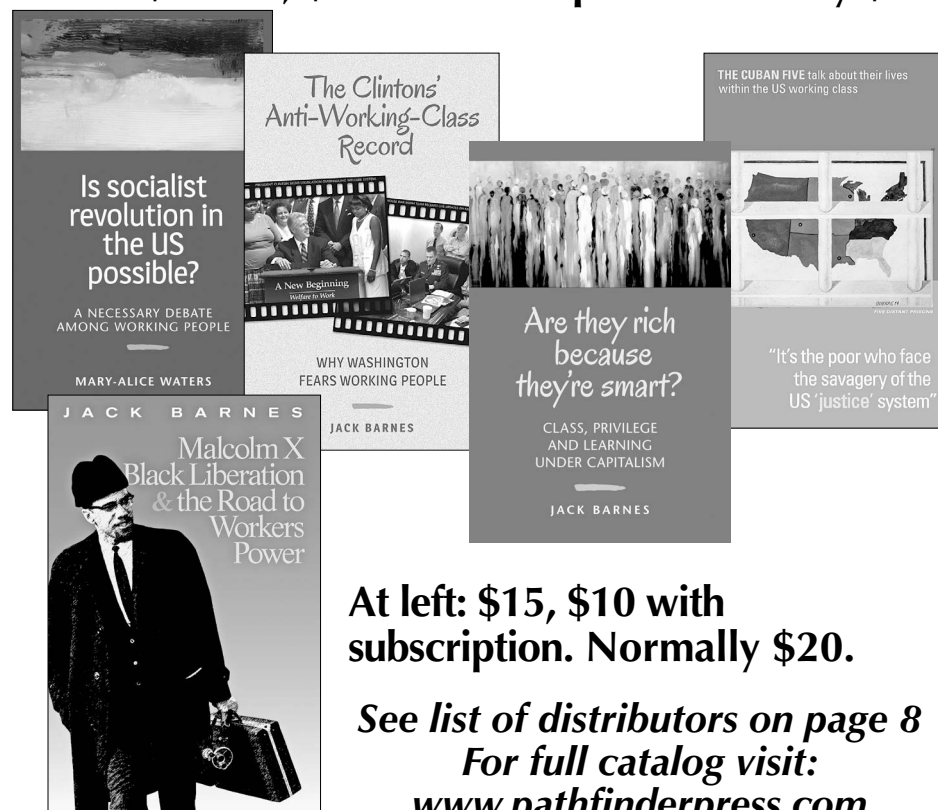
Because of this the *Militant* relies for financial backing from the only reliable source possible — its working-class readership. Your contributions cover our costs, from printing to reporting trips, including the paper’s ability to keep its subscription costs within reach of all workers.

In contrast, editors of the major dailies are politically beholden to the capitalist rulers. As the political crisis of the ruling-class Democratic and Republican parties unfolds toward the 2020 elections, even the pretense of objective reporting standards these publications used to claim — like the *New York Times*’ claim to produce “all the news that’s fit to print” — has given way to greater factional prejudice.

Two of the *Militant*’s readers in Miami said they’re going to make their donations online, one of the new features on our website. You can do this at www.themilitant.com, or mail your check made out to the *Militant* to 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018. Every contribution makes a difference!!

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—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

New York

Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, 1959-2019. Special guest: Ambassador Anayansi Rodríguez Camejo. Fri., Feb. 8. Reception and program, 6 p.m. *People’s Forum*, 320 W. 37 St. Sponsored by the Cuba Sí Coalition.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

ILLINOIS

Chicago

In Celebration of Black History Month: The Legacy of Malcolm X. How is Malcolm X relevant today in the fight against racism and exploitation? Fri., Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 1858 W. Cermak Road, 2nd floor. Tel.: (312) 455-0111.

‘I want to join your campaign!’

Continued from front page

friends had encouraged her to get a construction job. “After I started, I wasn’t called to work for a week. The boss told me the guys wouldn’t work if I did,” she said.

“So I went to the site and told my co-workers why I need the job. They said, ‘OK.’ I do framing and roofing, and now the guys are training me to read construction plans,” she said.

Kennedy told Palacios about her own experiences when she started working as an underground coal miner. She described how women who worked in the mines won support from male miners and the United Mine Workers union. “We need to rebuild a labor movement that speaks for all the exploited and oppressed and organize unions to fight for better conditions,” said Kennedy.

Palacios told Kennedy she wanted to help her campaign. She got a subscription to the *Militant* to follow the party’s activities and signed the petition to put Kennedy on the ballot.

Working people here, like across the country, have seen their wages and working conditions hard hit by the bosses and their government over the last few decades. They know something fundamental is wrong and want to know why, and what they can do about it.

Because they don’t see some powerful social struggle — like a rising labor movement or mass movement against imperialist war — they tend to look for an answer in the elections. That’s why many decided to vote for Donald Trump in 2016, looking at it as a way to demand change and against the “swamp” of suits in Washington and every statehouse.

“I voted for Trump as a protest and because he wasn’t really a Democrat or a Republican,” John Daniels told Kennedy in southeast Dallas.

“As Mexicans and Blacks moved into this neighborhood, a lot of people left, but I didn’t. When I was invited to a barbecue by my Mexican neighbors, we got talking and I told them I voted for Trump. They were shocked, but we got along. They call me ‘Gran Torino,’” Daniels said. He was referring to the Clint Eastwood movie about an aging auto worker in Detroit who seems like a racist but ends up with strong relations with neighboring Asians and others.

“Everyone knows their neighbors here. We look out for each other,” Daniels said.

“My campaign seeks to mobilize working people to fight for amnesty for all those in the U.S. who are undocumented,” Kennedy said. “The bosses

and their parties, the Democrats and Republicans, use the immigration laws to doubly exploit immigrant workers, to drag down the wages of all working people and to try and get us to fight among ourselves instead of against their dog-eat-dog system of capitalism.”

Example of Cuban Revolution

“I’ve visited Cuba, where people and their government look out for their neighbors,” Kennedy said. “Working people there had a revolution, overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and took power into their own hands. That’s what workers and farmers need to do here.”

“That’s why they restrict travel there,” said Daniels, “Because they don’t want Americans to see what is going on in Cuba.”

Daniels said he had already run into Kennedy campaigners earlier and signed the petition. “I’m going to vote for you,” he told her.

Kennedy and campaign supporters Mike Galati and Jacquie Henderson met Moises Lopez and Cirilo Martinez at their home in East Dallas. “We work all our lives and what do we have? Right now we have this house but they just raised the taxes so high it is difficult to pay them,” Lopez said.

“And we hear they have plans to wipe out all these houses because they want to build new, fancier houses that no one here will be able to afford.” He asked, “What would you do as mayor?”

People ask me a lot, “What would you do as mayor?” Kennedy told the *Militant*. “I explain that if I were elected mayor, it would mean that working people had decided in large number to fight for far-reaching change, for an independent working-class program, and the Socialist Workers Party would help advance that development.

“Revolutionary change comes from working-class struggle. That is the lesson of the mass fight for Black rights that changed things in this country forever, that’s the lesson of the Cuban Revolution.”

“The question isn’t what I would do,



Militant/Eric Simpson

Benito and Minnie Hernandez told Dennis Richter, left, SWP candidate for L.A. City Council, in West Dallas Jan. 25 their pay was too low to afford to retire. Richter was in Texas to campaign for Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for Dallas, and to help get her on the ballot.

it’s what we would do to transform ourselves in struggle, becoming capable of taking control of the government and our destiny,” she said.

‘System stacked’ against workers

Campaigners drove from Dallas 60 miles west to Weatherford, a town of 30,000. They picked a working-class neighborhood and began knocking on doors, where they met 21-year-old cabinetmaker trainee Andy Brown. “I’m young but I know what’s happening in the world,” he said. “I agree that the whole system is stacked against working people. I’d like to be part of a movement organizing to unite workers to change things,” said Brown.

“We can do it,” responded this correspondent. “Just look at the example of Cuba where workers and farmers took over the country in 1959 and began to transform it, organizing in their own interests — in spite of opposition from every U.S. administration since.”

“I’d sure like to know about that,” said Brown. I invited him to visit Cuba on the May Day brigade. Brown invited SWP members to come back the next weekend so we could talk more about it.

Also in Weatherford, Henderson and I met fast food worker Andrew Brown. “My wife and I both work at Whata-

burger,” he said. “It’s hard to cover the basic costs for us and our two little ones. We don’t get paid enough even when we get a full week’s work.

“I have to look up an app on my phone to see what other restaurants in the chain have open hours and sometimes drive as much as 40 miles to get those shifts,” Brown said. Moving into their small house had cost them over \$1,700 in rent and deposits and they have no money left for furniture.

“It’s increasingly hard for workers to get a home and build a family,” I said.

“This is not how it’s supposed to be. We need to think about organizing together, like your candidate says here,” Brown said, pointing to the party’s campaign flyer. He asked us to come back so he and his wife can sign up for the *Militant* and talk more.

Over the last two weeks, campaigners sold 153 party campaign books, 60 *Militant* subscriptions and 200 single copies of the paper. The most popular book was *In Defense of the US Working Class*, which reprints a speech SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters gave at a conference in Havana last year.

Over 750 people signed petitions to put Kennedy’s name on the ballot for the May 4 election, well over three times the requirement.

SWP candidate campaigns for abortion, prisoners’ rights

BY SAMIR HAZBOUN

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Amy Husk, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Kentucky governor, and her supporters are campaigning to defend women’s right to choose abortion from threatened new attacks here. Leaders in the

legislature are moving to pass a “fetal heartbeat” bill that can lead to a frontal legal challenge to the Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in 1973. The bill would make most abortions illegal six weeks into a woman’s pregnancy when a physician can detect a heartbeat.

At the same time, there is growing momentum among workers here to change the Kentucky Constitution, which contains an anti-working-class provision that denies restoration of voting rights to almost all ex-prisoners who have been convicted on felony charges. A popular movement won overwhelming passage of a constitutional amendment in Florida last November to overturn a similar provision and restore voting rights for over a million ex-prisoners there.

In response to these developments, Husk attended a number of events over the Jan. 26-27 weekend to raise the importance of mobilizing around these issues. She carried a sign saying, “Defend Abortion Rights; Restore Voting Rights; Socialist Workers Party; Husk for Governor.”

Wanda McIntyre, a former auto-

worker and member of the King Solomon Baptist Church, rushed over to talk to Husk at one of the actions, saying, “That’s what I’m talking about!” She said she is part of an activist group at her church called “Women of Faith,” which is very interested in working on the campaign to restore voting rights for former prisoners. She also wants to defend women’s right to abortion. McIntyre invited Husk to come meet with the church group at their next meeting to discuss how to work together on the voting rights’ fight.

As the two were talking, a reporter came up and asked to interview both of them. In response to a question, McIntyre drew on her auto plant experience to explain the importance of building unity when confronted with a challenge by the bosses. “We never had any problem with unity on the assembly line,” she said. “We worked together and we fought side by side, whatever our differences.”

McIntyre introduced Husk to several others she knew who shared similar enthusiasm for hearing a working-class perspective and learning about the Socialist Workers Party campaign.

Campaign with the Socialist Workers Party candidates!

California

Dennis Richter, Los Angeles City Council
Laura Garza, Los Angeles School Board

Florida

Anthony Dutrow, Miami City Commission

Illinois

Dan Fein, Chicago Mayor

Kentucky

Amy Husk, Governor

Minnesota

David Rosenfeld, St. Paul City Council

Nebraska

Joe Swanson, Lincoln Mayor

New Jersey

Lea Sherman, State Assembly
Candace Wagner, State Assembly

New York

Seth Galinsky, New York City Public Advocate
Samantha Hamlin, Mayor of Troy
Larry Quinn, Troy City Council

Pennsylvania

Osborne Hart, Philadelphia Mayor
John Staggs, Philadelphia City Council
Malcolm Jarrett, Pittsburgh City Council

Texas

Alyson Kennedy, Dallas Mayor

Washington

Henry Clay Dennison, Seattle City Council.

See directory on page 8 to contact party campaign office nearest you.

Celebrate Cuba's revolution

Continued from front page

Day in Revolution Square,” said Arnold. “For me it was the highlight of the brigade.”

Jabari Tidmore, of the Chicago Cuba Coalition, and Dan Fein, a coalition member and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party in Chicago, co-chaired the meeting. Fein described how Cuba's workers and farmers, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, took power on Jan. 1, 1959 and began to transform the country to meet their needs. He explained how they've extended the hand of solidarity to workers' struggles worldwide and stood up against six decades of the U.S. rulers' economic and political attacks.

Tidmore urged those at the meeting to sign up for the brigade, as it had been a “life-changing experience” for him.

Sheila McNary, who had been a member of the Illinois Black Panther Party, gave greetings and described how Cuba had offered asylum for party members during the Black rights struggle. The African-American music and dance youth group Kuumba Lynx performed.

A similar event drew 80 people Jan. 18 in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the DC Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution. It featured Miguel Fraga, first secretary of the Embassy of Cuba. He invited participants to come see Cuba and its revolution for themselves and to bring what they learn back to people in the U.S.

Excited about the brigade

“I am excited to travel to Cuba to see what a government that is built to truly care for its people looks like. Because from this vantage point, living in the U.S., it's hard to imagine,” Kaitlin Estill told the *Militant* about her plans to go on the May Day brigade.

Estill, a middle school special education teacher in San Francisco, discussed the brigade with Socialist Workers Party member Samir Hazboun, from Louisville, Kentucky, who is also going on the trip. “I'm excited to go to Cuba as a teacher, to see an education system built to really encourage and facilitate learning,” Estill said. “I can barely picture what my job would look like if, instead of helping kids

swim upstream all day, I was given the time and resources to facilitate curiosity, creativity and true learning.”

As brigade participants meet Cuban workers and farmers, and representatives of their mass organizations, they will learn about the history of the Cuban Revolution and its impact on the lives of working people on the island and around the world. Brigadistas can share their experiences in the struggles and political developments they have been part of in their own countries.

On May 1, brigade participants will join hundreds of thousands of Cubans at the annual International Workers Day march and rally in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution.

The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) is sponsoring the brigade. Its call for the brigade explains that 2019 also marks the 80th anniversary of the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC). As part of their itinerary, participants will meet with CTC members and leaders to discuss the history and current efforts of the union movement there.

Brigadistas will be based at the Julio Antonio Mella camp 25 miles outside



Prensa Latina

Miguel Fraga, first secretary of the Embassy of Cuba, speaks at Jan. 18 Washington, D.C., event to celebrate 60th anniversary of Cuban Revolution. Panel included Omari Musa, left, from sponsoring DC Metro Coalition and leader of Socialist Workers Party; Luis Rumbaut, right, Antonio Maceo Brigade; and Cheryl LaBash, co-chair of National Network on Cuba.

Havana and do volunteer labor at nearby farms. They'll visit the provinces of Havana, Artemisa, Villa Clara and Sancti Spiritus, visit museums commemorating key events in Cuban history, and meet with Cuban groups in each city.

A \$650 fee covers all expenses in Cuba, including accommodation, meals and transportation. The round-trip airfare to Cuba is extra.

The U.S. contingent is being or-

ganized by the National Network on Cuba. Applications are open until March 15 — six weeks from now — and are available along with more information at www.nnoc.info. The complete itinerary and program of the 14-day brigade can be seen there.

Dan Fein from Chicago and James Harris from Washington, D.C. contributed to this article.

Va. teachers march over wages, school conditions

Continued from front page

three different explanations of the state legislature's promises, and I still don't understand them,” she told the *Militant*.

Virginia Educators United is made up of teachers and other school workers, including members of various unions and those who are not in unions, as well as parents, who want to fight for their demands.

Since 2008 state funding per student has been cut by 10 percent. There are 10,423 fewer school workers today, including 4,000 fewer teachers, while enrollment has jumped by 50,000. Virginia law allows local school districts to raise money to supplement state funding; meaning schools in wealthier areas have more and better paid school workers and supplies.

“The state says that local governments should pay their ‘fair share,’”

said Kathy Beery, a reading specialist from Harrisonburg and activist in Virginia Educators United. “What's being said is that it's OK to have two-tiers in education based on poverty,” she said.

Beery noted that the majority of students where she works qualify for free breakfast and reduced-lunch programs. She said, “It's a world problem, the rich are keeping people in servitude.”

Juliane Toce, a science teacher in Richmond told the *Militant*, “An increase in salary would be a big bonus to getting funding across the board.

“The buildings aren't safe. The school I teach in is 100 years old. Twice in the last 18 months, storms blew in the 15-foot glass panels. Luckily, at the time there were no children around. There's a shortage of buses and bus drivers, kids have to

sit three-deep on the bus.”

Mathew Bryan, 31, from Dinwiddie County was part of a Carpenters union contingent of 15 who came to show solidarity. “The schools are steadily going down,” he said.

Virginia is marked by stark differences in income and conditions in different parts of the state. With three of the richest areas and highest median household income in the U.S. in northern Virginia — in Loudoun and Fairfax counties, and Falls Church City — teachers can't afford to live where they work. Some live as far away as West Virginia.

Ayesha Darby, a preschool teacher in Richmond, said her day begins at 6:30 a.m. when she gets her son ready for school. She teaches 5-year-olds from 8:30 a.m. to 3:34 p.m., then picks up her daughter, makes dinner and goes to her second job from 5 to 11 p.m. at Kohl's. Darby said, “I get one 15-minute break all day.”

“We need to strike,” she said.

As teachers marched in Virginia, school workers in West Virginia reacted to a series of proposed attacks on their unions and working conditions in a new bill submitted to the state legislature. They are discussing a one-day strike. Teachers there started a wave of teacher protests across the country last year fighting for higher pay and more state funds for schools.

Ninety-seven percent of school workers in Mingo County voted Jan. 29 to authorize a strike. The bill they are fighting retains the 5 percent pay raise school workers won in their 2018 strike and protest movement, but it raises class size from 25 to 28, undercuts job seniority, introduces “differential pay” to divide workers, legalizes charter schools and school vouchers and makes it harder for unions to collect dues.

Mingo County is in the heart of West Virginia coal country. The decadeslong tradition of militant miners' union struggles marked the school workers' revolt there last year.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 14, 1994

The earthquake that shook Los Angeles in January was an act of nature. But its consequences are measured more accurately on an economic/social scale than on the Richter scale.

While tens of thousands of working people continue to suffer the effects of the quake, the government is using the disaster as an excuse to attack workers' rights, especially those of immigrants. The decision by the House Appropriations Committee of the U.S. Congress to deny all but emergency aid to undocumented workers is outrageous.

The capitalist rulers and their representatives at all levels of government are to blame for the level of human suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake. They are the ones who won't rebuild housing or a mass transit system or provide emergency relief on the scale needed, if it's not profitable.



February 14, 1969

RICHMOND, Calif. — On Jan. 30 the Contra Costa Central Labor Council unanimously authorized a general strike to protest the conduct of the Richmond police department against the striking members of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union.

In Richmond, the strike has produced particularly bitter confrontations between pickets at the Standard Oil refinery and scab truck drivers and local cops. One picket has been run over by a truck. Wives and children of the striking workers joining the picket line have been beaten and maced by the cops.

The Iranian Students' Association came to the line to support the strike and hand out a leaflet defending 14 political prisoners being held by the Shah. One man read the leaflet and commented, “You've got problems. Standard Oil practically runs your country too.”



February 12, 1944

One of the most threatening aspects of the anti-labor campaign whipped up by Roosevelt is the leading role played by the brass hats in the drive against the unions. The basis for the campaign was laid by General Marshall whose violent attack upon labor was directly inspired by Roosevelt. With the ground thus prepared in advance, the authoritative *Army and Navy Journal* “predicted” that the president would recommend a labor-draft law in his message to congress. That “prediction” was fulfilled to the letter when Roosevelt, in his message, proposed “a national service law” to outlaw strikes for the duration.

Big Business, which controls the press and radio, has turned its facilities over to the brass hats who are using their military rank to push the program of Wall Street.

Cuban leader pays tribute to José Ramón Fernández

Speech by José Ramón Machado Ventura, second secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, at memorial tribute to José Ramón Fernández in Havana, Jan. 8. Family members present included Asela de los Santos, Fernández's lifelong companion. The translation and breakers are by the Militant.

Dear Asela and other members of Division General José Ramón Fernández Álvarez's family.

Compañero Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, president of the Councils of State and Ministers.

There are individuals who have led such full, genuinely exemplary lives that it is impossible to associate them with the idea of death. We will always remember them associated with life, with their productive work for the good of their people and of humanity.

Fernández is, without the slightest exaggeration, one of these exceptional beings. His sense of duty and his ethical principles were an infallible compass in everything he did.

As soon as Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, the first secretary of our party, heard the news of Fernández's death, he was one of the first to convey condolences, from Santiago de Cuba, where he is now. I am sure that the vast majority of Cubans share these feelings of solidarity. Please receive them on behalf of us all.

During the early years of his adult life, still without a clear conception of what would be the right path, imagine how much moral strength it took to consistently maintain correct conduct in an environment in which there prevailed — with a few honorable exceptions — pettiness, selfishness, greed, and unprincipled rivalry to rise in the ranks.

That's the way things were in the army of a republic under the Yankee boot — the army that idealistic young man entered, full of energy, with the sole aim of serving the homeland in any way he could.

Thanks to his tenacity, discipline, intelligence, effort, and accomplishments, Fernández overcame the many obstacles he faced, time and time again — obstacles that arose because of his steadfast refusal to capitulate to dishonorable proposals and his insistence of guiding himself solely by the dictates of his conscience. Through this difficult battle, he became convinced that it wasn't enough to avoid getting involved, to simply repudiate the depth of corruption that existed. Action was needed, and without hesitation he risked everything. He initiated a conspiracy within the military, the only sector of society he knew, and the route he considered the most likely to succeed under the circumstances. Events showed him that his views were wrong.

In April of 1956 a Council of War, following the orders of the dictator, sentenced him to prison. He was sent to the so-called Model Prison on what was then known as the Isle of Pines.

This proved to be not only an undeserved punishment. It also turned out to be a veritable school that provided answers to many of his questions about

how Cuba could gain true independence and provide a more just society for its children. Through daily interaction with the [July 26 Movement] combatants, he began to see the true and only path to making that long-held dream a reality.

Until then, Fernández had been one of the army's exceptional honorable officers. But during those hard years in prison First Lieutenant Fernández became forever "El Gallego" Fernández — an unconditional soldier of the revolution.

Becoming a revolutionary

By Jan. 1, 1959, the incorruptible and upright patriot had also become a courageous and convinced revolutionary. He wasn't yet a communist in the full sense of the word. But he was a man with advanced social and political views, one ready to risk everything to make those views a reality.

That's what his compañeros in the political prison told the main leaders of the revolution. This explains why, shortly after the triumph, both the Commander in Chief and Commander Raúl Castro Ruz met with Fernández to discuss what help could be expected from him. That initial conversation was enough for both of them, separately, to reach the same conclusion. They had before them a sincere, transparent man who said what he thought and did so with absolute clarity. In short, he was someone in whom the revolution could have confidence.

He was immediately entrusted with important tasks. Fernández, the charismatic Gallego, a Santiago native with the accent of one born on Spanish soil, who shortly before had decided, with deep disappointment, to give up his military career, accepted Fidel's request without second thought and turned down the sizable salary of a sugar mill administrator, a job he had already agreed to take. He put on the olive green uniform, accepted the modest pay of a Rebel Army officer, and headed out to fulfill the mission he was entrusted with.

For Fernández, prison became a "school that provided answers to his questions about how Cuba could gain true independence ..."

matic Gallego, a Santiago native with the accent of one born on Spanish soil, who shortly before had decided, with deep disappointment, to give up his military career, accepted Fidel's request without second thought and turned down the sizable salary of a sugar mill administrator, a job he had already agreed to take. He put on the olive green uniform, accepted the modest pay of a Rebel Army officer, and headed out to fulfill the mission he was entrusted with.

As Fernández demonstrated his capabilities, the initial intuitions of the leader of the revolution and Commander Raúl Castro about him changed rapidly into a profound conviction.

Helping forge new revolutionary army

Fernández's extensive contributions since then are well known to our people. In the convulsive first years of the revolution, he went from one mission to another as circumstances dictated. With characteristic modesty, he placed his military knowledge at the disposal of the newborn Revolutionary Armed Forces. This proved extremely valuable in confronting the relentless aggression by our powerful northern neighbor, which began immediately.

He was assigned to head the Rebel Army's Cadet Academy. Without neglecting this responsibility, he also assumed command of preparing Havana's first militia battalions — combatants who were awarded a "green beret" after completing brief but intense train-



Above, José Ramón Fernández, left, leading Cuban forces against April 1961 U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion. Behind him, revolutionary soldiers aid captured mercenary. Fernández carried out many responsibilities from training first militia battalions to helping transform education system. Left, José Ramón Machado Ventura, second secretary of Communist Party of Cuba, speaking at tribute to Fernández. Machado was medical doctor and combatant of Rebel Army during revolutionary war that overthrew Batista dictatorship in 1959.

ing. Alongside them, he took part in confrontations with counterrevolutionary bands organized and armed by the United States.

Fernández later served as founding director of the Militia Leadership School in Matanzas, and went with its students to fight at Playa Girón. There, under the direct command of the commander in chief, he played an outstanding part in leading the actions that produced the first big defeat of US imperialism on this continent.

Given such outstanding merits, he was awarded the rank of commander in June 1961. A month later he was appointed to head the Directorate of Combat Preparedness within the general staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

In 1964 he graduated from the Superior School of War as a member of its first class, and in January 1969 he was appointed deputy minister of instruction in the Revolutionary Armed Forces. There he carried out valuable work in organizing and developing officer training within the educational institutions of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. More than a few of the principles he instituted remain in force today.

The year 1970 marked the beginning of another important chapter of his life. He was appointed minister of education and later vice president of the Council of Ministers for education and sports.

In carrying out these responsibilities, Fernández interpreted and put into practice ideas, conceived by the leader of the revolution, to advance the extraordinary educational work that has taken place in our homeland.

His contributions to the national educational system at all levels are notable and they are well known. The same is true in sports, where he headed the Cuban Olympic Committee for many years and continued as its honorary president until his death.

Thousands of teachers, professors, trainers, and athletes remember him with affection and respect. He was always in close contact with them and with the multitude of children, teenagers, and young students.

In 2012, when his health and advanced age required a slower pace of

work, he continued contributing his experience and knowledge as an adviser to the president of the Councils of State and Ministers. Until very recently, overcoming his difficulties walking, we would see him arrive very early every morning at the Palace of the Revolution to fulfill this important responsibility.

Our people paid well-deserved acknowledgments to such effort and results. A founding member of the party, he was a member of its Central Committee from the First Congress in 1975 on, an alternate member of the Political Bureau, and an active party member and delegate to all party congresses.

He was elected to the National Assembly of People's Power at its formation in 1976 and remained a deputy at the time of his death.

He was awarded many honors, both national and international. Noteworthy were his recognition as a Hero of the Republic of Cuba and decoration with the Order of Playa Girón on April 16, 2001, the 40th anniversary of that momentous victory.

A book containing his memoirs, with a foreword by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, came off the press some two months ago, with the idea of presenting it to the public on the occasion of his 95th birthday.

That didn't happen. Already bedridden when he received the first copy and heard about the idea, he insisted —

Continued on facing page

'Amnesty for immigrants is key question for working-class unity'

New book discusses why it's vital to build labor movement that fights for interests of all workers

In Defense of the US Working Class, by Mary-Alice Waters, is now off the presses.

It features the talk by Waters at an April 24-26, 2018, international conference in Havana organized by the Cuban History Institute and the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC). Waters is a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and president of Pathfinder Press, publisher of the book.

Her talk was followed by a panel on the U.S. class struggle titled, "From Clinton to Trump: How US working people are responding to the anti-labor offensive of the bosses, their parties and their government."

The panelists, leaders and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party with years of experience in industry and trade

unions as well as on the land, explained how workers have fought back against the 40-year offensive by the employers and their government.

In Defense of the US Working Class includes summaries of those remarks, as well as short biographies of the panelists. In previous weeks the *Militant* printed those of Alyson Kennedy, Omar Musa, Willie Head and Jacob Perasso. This week we feature the presentations by Harry D'Agostino and Róger Calero.

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HARRY D'AGOSTINO. *Harry is a worker, bass player, band leader, and Young Socialist. He and his band perform throughout the Northeast and North Central regions of the US. Although he was unable to join the Havana panel at the last minute, his prepared remarks were distributed to those present.*

D'Agostino explained that like many millions of young workers he has held numerous jobs, from small shops to warehouses. Also like millions, he's almost always been a "temp worker" who gets no guaranteed hours or days of work, no health coverage, vacation time, or unemployment compensation — and can be fired at any time. Many young workers also struggle under the weight of tens of thousand of dollars of student debt "urged upon us by the government and banks as a way to 'get ahead.'" Most have no hope of ever paying it off, he said.

He described the eye-opening impact of the West Virginia teachers strike, where he and others of his



Harry D'Agostino

generation saw for the first time the power of the working class in action. "A large-scale workers movement, a social movement across an entire state was entirely new to us," D'Agostino said. "Even more so, a victory was something new. It made it possible to think about fighting and organizing ourselves to emulate that example."



RÓGER CALERO. *Róger came to the US from Nicaragua with his family when he was fifteen. He has worked in meat-packing plants in Minnesota and Iowa, where he was a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers and involved in organizing drives and in union struggles defending the rights of immigrant workers. In 2002 the US government arrested and attempted to deport him, triggering a successful international defense effort that won the support of many unions. He was the presidential candidate of the Socialist*



Courtesy Micheal Peterson

Rally in O'Neill, Nebraska, Aug. 8, 2018, protesting arrest and deportation of workers without papers at nearby factories and farms. The source of anti-immigrant prejudice is not the working class, Róger Calero notes, but the bosses, who benefit from discrimination.

Workers Party in 2004 and 2008.

Calero focused his remarks on what is at stake for the labor movement in the defense of immigrant workers. He explained what is behind the anti-immigrant drive that has been ratcheted up by the administration of Donald Trump, and how the working class in the United States has been strengthened by the incorporation of millions of foreign-born workers.

The political struggle to win the labor movement and big majority of working people to defend immigrant workers, he said, "is a life-and-death question for the working class." The scapegoating of immigrants is one of the biggest weapons used by the ruling class and both its parties to divide and weaken the working class.

The source of anti-immigrant prejudice, he noted, is not the working class. It's the bosses who promote and benefit from such prejudice, like they profit from discrimination against Blacks and against women. They bring in immigrant labor to increase competition among workers, break unions, drive down wages, and intensify exploitation of the working class as a whole, as they did in the meat-packing industry in the 1980s.

"In the absence of an effective fight by the trade unions to defend the interests of the entire working class — and that includes the effort to organize workers without papers into the unions — this scapegoating of immigrants finds an echo among sections of the working class," Calero noted.

"But these attitudes are driven by the competition to sell their labor power, not racism."

The US rulers' objective is not to stop the flow of immigrants, only to regulate it based on their needs, as they have always done. "The vulgar prejudice spewed by President Trump and others around him," Calero noted, "his agitation to 'build the wall,' the brutal detentions, raids, deportations, workplace immigration audits, and other repressive measures are aimed at heightening insecurity and fear among all working people, not immigrant workers alone."

But it is the rulers themselves who are driven by fear, fear of the class battles that are coming and the unity that can be forged by US and foreign-born workers. We have seen this in the meatpacking plants of the Midwest, the coal mines in Utah, and other labor and social struggles.

"The political fight to win amnesty for workers without papers and defend the rights of immigrants is inseparable from the struggle to unify the working class as a whole," Calero said. "It is vital to building a trade union movement that fights for the interests of the entire class."



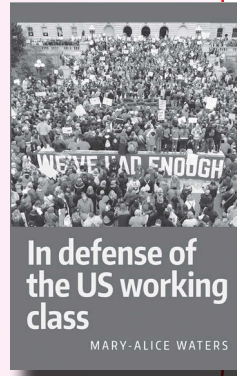
Róger Calero

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In Defense of the US Working Class by Mary-Alice Waters

A GIANT HAS BEGUN TO STIR. Hillary Clinton calls them "deplorable" who inhabit "backward" regions. But tens of thousands of teachers and school employees from West Virginia, Oklahoma, and beyond set an example in 2018 with their victorious strikes. Working people across Florida mobilized and won restoration of voting rights to more than 1 million former prisoners.

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US hands off Venezuela! Stop threats against Cuba!

Continued from front page

decide their own future, free of outside meddling and interference.

Washington claims it has the right to decide which governments are “legitimate” and which are not. This is nothing new. Since the Spanish-American War in 1898, every U.S. administration, no matter which party was in the White House, has overthrown governments in Latin America and around the world that weren’t to the capitalist rulers’ liking.

Working people in Venezuela face a real challenge. Despite the banner of the Maduro government that it was building “21st century socialism,” the fact is that working people in Venezuela never took political and economic power out of the hands of the capitalist class. Battered by the capitalist crisis, with no leadership pointing a working-class road forward, many have become demoralized or have left the country.

Washington knows this full well. Together with its

imperialist and capitalist allies, the U.S. government is taking advantage of the economic and political crisis facing Venezuela’s toilers to try to get what it wants — a regime totally under the thumb of U.S. imperialism. And they are using the crisis in Venezuela to prepare new attacks against the Cuban Revolution.

The Cuban Revolution shows the only way forward for workers and farmers around the world. On Jan. 1, 1959, a massive popular insurrection swept Cuba in response to the call by Fidel Castro and the Rebel Army for a general strike. They ousted the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and brought to power a government of workers and farmers, and created a new kind of army out of the rebel forces, based on working people.

At crucial turning points — like the U.S. invasion at the Bay of Pigs, Cuba’s massive response to the request from the newly independent Angolan government for military help against the invasion by apartheid South Africa, and the loss of most of its trade when the Stalin-

ist regime in the Soviet Union collapsed — Cuba’s revolutionary leadership and government responded. They mobilized the masses and told the truth about the challenges they faced. They organized to increase the understanding, class consciousness, self-confidence and discipline of the island’s workers and farmers. Working people proved they are capable of organizing society in the interest of the vast majority.

This is what remains ahead of workers and farmers in Venezuela, like in the U.S. and the rest of the capitalist world. Working people in Venezuela need time and space to be able to forge a leadership in struggle that can organize them to take political power into their own hands. Working people the world over should demand that Washington and its allies stop violating the sovereignty of Venezuela and stop their relentless attacks against Cuba.

U.S. hands off Venezuela! End the U.S. embargo of Cuba!

US rulers move to oust Maduro government in Venezuela

BY RÓGER CALERO

“The main threat to peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean is the harassment of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the U.S. government and its allies,” said Anayansi Rodríguez, the Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, during the U.N. Security Council meeting on the crisis in Venezuela held at U.S. request Jan. 26.

In a move orchestrated by Washington, opposition politician Juan Guaidó, head of the National Assembly, declared himself president of the country Jan. 23, claiming that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro had “usurped” power. The U.S. government — with a big measure of bipartisan support — immediately “recognized” Guaidó and stepped up measures against the Venezuelan government.

On Jan. 29 Washington blocked the Maduro government from access to Venezuela’s bank accounts in the U.S., along with those of the state-owned PDVSA oil company and revenue from PDVSA-owned Citgo — some \$7 billion.

London is also aiding Washington’s blatant violation of Venezuela’s sovereignty. The Bank of England refused to comply with demands by the Maduro government to repatriate \$1.2 billion in gold holdings.

The U.S. government is “disconnecting” the Maduro government “from the source of its revenues,” John Bolton, national security adviser for the Donald Trump administration, said Jan. 24.

Washington has enlisted the backing of the governments of 11 Latin American countries — Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru — as well as Canada’s rulers. The governments of Germany, France and others in Europe have told Maduro to agree to new elections by Feb. 2 or they’ll join the U.S.-led campaign to replace him.

Carefully tutored by Washington, Guaidó is open-

ly promoting a coup, calling on the military to oust Maduro and offering an amnesty for those who act “in favor of the restitution of democracy.”

In a Jan. 30 column “Venezuela’s Best Path to Democracy: Pay Off the Military,” the *New York Times* called for more “persuasive” U.S. government offers to guarantee the military’s control over highly lucrative businesses as the key to win its support. Under the government of late President Hugo Chávez and under Maduro, high-ranking officers have been given control of economic fiefs in the state-run oil company, ports, and mining.

The *Times* stated that while Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López and the top military brass say they stand with Maduro, “behind closed doors, the military may be waiting for a better offer.”

Echoing U.S. government slanders, Guaidó claims that Cuban “operatives” control the Venezuelan military and should get out. This is a bald-faced lie. The top military brass there responds to what best serves the defense of capitalist property relations and their place in that. Up to now, that has been with Maduro.

A ‘third way’?

Maduro, like Chávez, has maintained a course that explicitly rejects the road taken by the Cuban Revolution — of organizing the working class to take political power. Instead, they have attempted to regulate the capitalist economy while using part of the oil profits to finance social programs.

The deepening crisis of capitalist production and trade today, along with the hostility and pressure from Washington and its allies, have intensified a growing economic and social crisis in Venezuela.

Annual inflation has reached a rate of more than 1 million percent. Shortages of food, medicine and other basic necessities are widespread, with devastating consequences for working people.

The Venezuelan government has depended on oil for 95 percent of its foreign currency. Even before the latest sanctions, the combination of the drop in oil prices over the last five years, along with a nearly 70 percent decline in production since 1998 — a result of bureaucratic mismanagement and corruption — had depleted government funds and devastated the industry.

Seeing no end to the crisis, some 3 million people have fled the country since 2015, including 1 million to Colombia, and hundreds of thousands to Peru, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. Hundreds of thousands have also moved to the U.S. and Spain.

The U.S. rulers’ moves today are a bet that their long-standing policy to avoid the political cost of military intervention by letting the crisis eat away at support among working people for the Maduro government until it falls will now pay off.

Unlike previous rounds of opposition protests against the Maduro government, which have been centered among middle-class layers, there has been noticeable participation in recent protests from working-class neighborhoods.

Attempt to smear Cuban Revolution

Washington is also using the crisis in Venezuela to step up hostility toward revolutionary Cuba.

Soon after Chávez became president in 1998 amid mobilizations of workers and farmers in Venezuela, the Cuban government responded to his request to send thousands of internationalist volunteers, including health care workers, sports instructors and literacy teachers, to assist working people there.

In his speech to the Security Council, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo claimed that “no regime has done more to sustain the nightmarish conditions of the Venezuelan people than the regime in Havana.” He repeated the slander that “Cuban security and intelligence thugs ... have sustained this illegitimate rule.”

Cuban Ambassador Rodríguez replied that the U.S. government is “deliberately lying and ignoring that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a free, independent and sovereign nation that makes its own decisions.” Cuba’s internationalist mission in solidarity with Venezuela, she said, is dedicated to providing life-essential services, above all in health and education.

The Trump administration is weighing stepped-up attacks on the Cuban Revolution. Since the passage of the Helms-Burton Act in 1996, every U.S. president has routinely suspended for six months at a time the Title III clause, which would allow U.S. citizens to sue companies that use property nationalized by the revolutionary government after it came to power in 1959. But in January Pompeo announced the suspension was being renewed for just 45 days this time and said continued extension is under review.

The *Miami Herald* reported Jan. 25 that the White House is also considering putting Cuba back on Washington’s list of “sponsors” of state terrorism.

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